

SHE'LACH 5773

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

In this parasha- Yehoshua and Kalev said it all, **TOVAH HA'ARETZ ME'OD, ME'OD** (14:7). No one could express it any better- "The Land that we passed through is **VERY VERY GOOD**.

Not only is it good, and not only very good, but very,very good. That one word, that extra "very" conveys a powerful message. That second "very" is saying that the land is very good and No Buts.., no Ifs and no However.., can be added.

The other ten spies also admitted that the Land was good, however, they then qualified their praise with a "But", saying, "But the people that live there are very strong and their cities are fortified" (13:28). In other words, the Land is good- but, there are problems. That is saying Lashon HaRa on Eretz Yisrael.

When we speak about Eretz Yisrael it must be all positive. Saying things are good, and then adding a "BUT" ..that is bordering on Lashon HaRa. We can criticize the people, we can find fault with the government, we can complain about beauracracy, but we cannot say anything negative about the Land itself.

The Navi Ye'ches'keil [Ezekiel] was given a prophesy to expressed some very harsh words about the Land and the people of Israel. HaShem tells him to rebuke the people by saying:"HATISHPOT HATISHPOT ET IR HA'DAMIM" "Now you Ben Adam, will you rebuke the **city of bloodshed and let her know all of her abominations?"** (22:2) This chapter was originally selected to be the Haftarah for Parashat Kedoshim. The directions found in Chumashim state that according to Sephardic custom this Haftarah is read for Parashat Acharei-Mot, while according to Ashkenazic custom it is read for Parashat Kedoshim. Each custom tried to defer it to another week and delay its reading.

However, it has become a universally accepted minhag, that we never read this perek of Ye'ches'keil as our Haftarah, for it speaks very harshly against the Land of Israel. Rav Soloveitchik commented, the Navi had no choice, for he was commanded to convey this prophesy, *however, we are not obligated to listen to it, so we just don't read it aloud to the congregation.*

Therefore, the lesson for us today, whether we live in Aretz or in Chutz LaAretz, the Land is Tovah Me'od Me'od. We are not allowed to express anything negative about it or **even listen to anything negative that is expressed by others.** For me personally this is very easy to observe because I truly believe it to be true.

I hear G-d speaking to me- during Keriat HaTorah.

I connect to G-d--- when I speak to Him- at the Kotel.

I feel the power of the Birkat Kohanim going through every part of my body when over a

thousand Kohanim recite the Berachot in unison on Chol HaMo'ed Pesach and Sukkot

at the Kotel, and daily every morning of the year in my local shul. And last but not least,

I see HaShem----- when I gaze at the colorful, beautiful and delicious produce at the Machaneh Yehuda market grown in this Land.

The Midrash asks: Why in our daily Shemoneh Esrei does the Beracha of “T’ka BaShofar Gadol Le’cheiruteinu”[Sound the great shofar for our freedom] follow the Beracha of “Bareich Aleinu Et HaShana Hazot? [Bless on our behalf-O HaShem –this year and all its kinds of crops for the best]? Answers the Midrash-“When you see the Beracha of Bareich Aleinu being fulfilled then you can be assured that the Beracha of Sounding the Great Shofar of gathering the exiles and Moshi’ach is on the way. Kein Yehi Ratzon!!

An emotional and sad event:

Last Sunday night, May 26, was the swearing-in ceremony of the Netzach Yehudi Battalion, the only Chareidi combat unit in the Israel Defense Forces. These ceremonies are usually **emotional** and **happy**. Family and friends come to pay tribute and honor to the newly inducted soldiers with a festive party and expressions of love and good wishes. This ceremony was different; it was **emotional** but **sad**. Not many family members and friends showed up, because, to them, these men were considered “traitors” to the Chareidi community for enlisting in the Army of Israel and turning their backs on Chareidi traditions. Nevertheless, the ceremony was emotional and moving, because this is the only unit in the IDF that concludes with the singing of Hatikva **FOLLOWED BY THE SINGING OF “ANI MA’AMIN BE’EMUNAH SHE’LEIMA”**.